

In Absentia

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In Absentia

by [whitchry9](#)

Summary

Peter wasn't looking to find a man in the garbage, but that's what he found when he was looking for computer parts. Not only that, but a half dead man who insists he doesn't go to the hospital. Peter does what any responsible citizen would do, that is, call Tony Stark for help.

He hopes dumpster man appreciates it.

Notes

Prompt can be found here: <http://daredevilkink.dreamwidth.org/8423.html?thread=17487079#cmt17487079>

ALSO this fic takes place in a verse where Civil War ended differently, everyone is still friends, but Spidey is hooked up with the Avengers.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

“Mr Stark, I know I'm only supposed to call you in emergencies, and I suppose this could be an emergency, but I'm not really sure, because it's not related to-” he lowers his voice “-you know, and-”

“Cut to the chase kid,” Stark interrupts.

“Right. So I found this guy in a dumpster and he's beaten up pretty bad and I tried to call an ambulance but he punched me, whispered no hospitals, then passed out.”

“So he's passed out, call an ambulance then.”

Peter hesitates. “But he said not to.”

“And now he's unconscious which means he can't say that again.”

“But he hit me,” Peter protests.

There's a beat of silence while Stark realizes what this meant. For someone to manage to hit Peter, even if they caught him off guard, it's still a big thing.

“I'll be there in five,” Stark says finally. “And Peter, I keep telling you, you can call me Tony.”

“Right, right, sorry,” Peter says, but Stark- Tony- has already hung up.

Peter inches back closer to the dumpster, listening for the man's breathing. It's there, and surprisingly steady considering the number of broken ribs Peter thinks he has (at least three). There's blood all over his face and at least a week's worth of beard growth. It's hard to tell if he smelled before he ended up in the dumpster, but Peter would be pretty confident in assuming the man was homeless.

It's only three minutes after the call to Tony ended when Iron Man arrives.

He lands next to Peter nearly quietly, and Peter knows he's scanning the man because he lets out a long whistle and the faceplate flips up.

“It's pretty impressive he punched you,” Tony says, and Peter scowls, but Tony keeps going, “Because he's got four broken ribs, a lung that is just waiting to be punctured, what is probably a skull fracture, fractures in his hands and forearms, likely internal bleeding, and a busted knee. This guy shouldn't have been conscious at all let alone able to punch you.”

Peter gapes at the man, surprised he is still breathing at all.

“I'm calling in the cavalry,” Tony says and only a second later, three more Iron Man suits come whooshing in behind him. One of them flies apart and reforms around the unconscious man.

Tony nods at it. “Medical suit. In case he has a spinal injury, it will keep him immobile. It can also shock a heart in abnormal rhythm, give oxygen, and inject a few medications like epinephrine. I'm still working on some of the details.” He frowns and Peter knows there's a story there, but it's not

the time.

The two other Iron Man suits pick up the one containing the man and rise slowly, heading in the direction of the Tower. Tony hovers just above the ground. “You did good kid,” he says, his voice not giving anything away through the modulator in the suit. Peter would like to think he sounded proud. “Come over after school tomorrow, I’ve got some things to show you.”

Peter tries to protest, but Tony is already gone, catching up to the other suits in an instant and doing loops around them as they move more slowly, carrying a delicate cargo.

He sighs and scuffs his foot in the weird alley gunk. “Didn’t even find a computer or anything,” he mutters, but heads home.

Chapter 2

The school day is boring (it always is) and he's kind of eager to find out how the dumpster man is doing. Peter hopes they found out his name because 'dumpster man' is demeaning and he was taught better than that.

He takes the F train to Manhattan and from there takes to the skies. It takes him about the same time to get to the Tower if he'd continued to take public transportation, but it lets him burn off some of the nervous energy he'd built up over worrying about the man.

A swipe of his access card lets him enter from the roof, and there's an elevator already waiting for him.

"Hi Friday," he greets.

"Hello Peter," she replies. "Mr Stark said you would be coming."

"How's the man doing from yesterday? The one I found in a dumpster," he clarifies, in case there are multiple men that Friday has to consider. She's brilliant, she really is, but sometimes she gets stuck on certain things.

"His condition is stable. He's in the medical wing, with Mr Stark." The elevator stops and the doors open, and Peter is not at all surprised to find he's on the floor with the medical wing. The medical wing takes up most of the floor, actually, not that he's spent enough time there to know. (Okay, he has spent a fair bit of time there, but not that much, really.)

It doesn't take long to find the man, since there's only one bed in use. The guy looks better than he did yesterday, most of the blood gone, but he's bruised since then, and Peter can tell just how beat up he is. There are oxygen tubes wrapped around his ears and various wires snaking out from under the sheet. The man has dark bruises around both of his eyes, making him kind of look like a raccoon, and there are cuts and scrapes all over his face, only one of them with stitches. He's also been shaved, and the lack of beard makes him look younger. Both his arms are in braces and there's something bulky along one of his legs that Peter suspects is another brace.

Tony comes up behind him, and Peter turns around. "Hey Mr Stark. I mean Tony, sorry," he apologizes. "How's he doing?"

Tony shrugs. "Like I said yesterday, this guy shouldn't have been conscious at all. Four broken ribs, but the lung wasn't punctured, which is nice. His skull is fractured, which is why he's got the raccoon eyes and why he's mostly been unconscious. He's got nightstick fractures of both forearms from holding them up to protect himself and cracks in his hands, possibly from hitting back. His liver is bleeding a bit, but it's not bad enough that it needs surgery, just needs to be monitored in case he does, and his kneecap was dislocated with some soft tissue damage. Malnutrition, exposure, assorted bruises, scrapes, and cuts, and that's about what you see here," Tony finishes, gesturing to the man.

Peter just gapes.

"The head injury is the most serious, but there isn't any bleeding, which is good, because he'd need

surgery for that, and we can't do that here. The doctor I consulted about the head injury said that there could be some vision impairment because of the skull fracture, which would really suck, but we won't know until he wakes up. Dr Cho's been in and set everything up, and I've got nurses taking care of his daily needs."

"Did you find out who he is?" Peter asks.

Tony blinks at him.

"Friday, did we find out who he is?" Tony asks.

"Not yet boss. Would you like me to hack into the NYPD's databases?"

"What, you haven't already? Yes, and let me know what you find."

"So that's a no," Peter clarifies.

Tony sighs. "Yeah, not yet."

"And has he woken up at all?"

"Eh, here and there. When he has, he wasn't really lucid. Mumbled something that I couldn't make out, tried to get up, but he's really not in any shape to be doing much of anything besides sleeping."

"You think he's homeless?" Peter asks.

"Probably," Tony nods. "It would explain why no one is looking for him. I checked missing persons reports right away, and none of them matched his description. Friday might be able to dig something else up, but until he wakes up, that's really all we've got to go on. I've been in touch with some of my police contacts, and they say there's not much we can do. They said they could send someone over to fingerprint him, but I can do that just as easily." Tony shrugs. "Sometimes that's just how it is. People go missing and no one looks. We've just got to hope that either someone starts looking, or he wakes up and can tell us who he is."

Peter nods, unable to shake the horrifying idea that some people just didn't have anyone. The man doesn't stir, only his chest rising and falling to let them know he's still alive.

Well, that and the computer read out that tells them his blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen saturation, and half a dozen other numbers that Peter has no clue about.

"You want to come down to the lab, work with me for a while?" Tony offers, but Peter shakes his head.

"I think I'm gonna sit with him for a bit, get some homework done." He has an English paper to write about symbolism in *The Great Gatsby*, and Peter still can't shake how awful it is that this man might be alone in the world.

Tony nods. "Okay. Let me know if anything changes."

Peter has no doubt that Friday would be able to alert him before anything even happened, but the thought is nice anyway. Tony leaves the room and Peter tugs a chair closer to the bed, pulling up another one for him to rest his feet on. He pulls out the dog-eared copy of the novel and starts flipping through, looking for something he could write about.

Next to him, the man continues breathing.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

I think we'll be looking at Monday and Friday updates.

It's another week before the man is conscious, another seven days of Peter showing up and doing homework at his bedside. He finishes his essay and moves on to studying for a chemistry test. He's about to move onto math when the man finally stirs.

"Mr Stark!" Peter yells, jumping up. "I mean, Tony!" Stupid, stupid, he won't be able to hear him. "Friday, can you get him?"

"He's on his way Peter. Remain calm."

The man in the bed is groaning now, shifting like he's having a bad nightmare, and he winces when he jostles his broken arms. The things Peter thought were braces are actually 3-D printed casts, which is amazing and way more convenient.

"Hey man, it's cool. You're okay. I mean, you're not okay, but you will be. Remember me? I found you in a dumpster and you punched me. Don't worry about that though, it's cool. I get punched a lot."

The man finally opens his eyes and blinks. The bruises have mostly faded, but they're still there, apparently characteristic of the type of skull fracture he has.

"Hey, I'm Peter," Peter says, moving closer so the man can see him without having to move much. The man doesn't look at him though, his eyes darting all around the room instead.

"It's not a hospital, promise," Peter tells him. "I know you didn't want that."

"Where?" he croaks out, and shit he sounds bad. Does he need water or something? Is he allowed to have water? What if he chokes? Dammit, Peter is bad at this.

"Oh, Avengers Tower."

The man groans, still not looking at Peter, and it's then that Peter remembers what Tony told him about the skull fracture, that sometimes it can lead to vision loss. It would explain why the guy hasn't looked at him.

Peter waves a hand in front of his face. The man doesn't blink.

Oh damn.

Tony arrives then, stained with grease and wearing a shirt with a hole cut out for the arc reactor.

"Uh Tony, we might have a problem," Peter says, trying to figure out how to say it with the guy laying right there. But if he hadn't realized he couldn't see, then maybe he was worse off than they

thought.

Tony looks between the two of them.

“I don't think...” Peter trails off, waving a hand in front of his eyes. He hopes Tony understands what he's trying to say.

“Shit,” Tony says. “Friday, can we get Dr Cho here, like now? Why isn't Bruce here,” Tony mutters. “Off vacationing while we need him.” He sighs, but steps closer to the bed.

“Hey, I'm Tony, Tony Stark, you may have heard of me. Can you tell me your name.”

The man looks confused, and he tries to move a hand up to his face, but has apparently forgotten they're both injured. He winces.

“What happened?”

“A relevant question, yes, but I already asked you one. Name.”

“My name depends on what happened,” he mutters.

Peter and Tony exchange a look.

“I found you in a dumpster,” Peter says finally. “I think you were left there after getting the shit kicked out of you.”

The man frowns. “That could go either way,” he whispers, probably quietly enough that Tony couldn't hear, but Peter's hearing was better than most.

“I'm not sure what you're worried about, but this guy is Iron Man, remember? If you need protecting, he can do that.”

Tony shoots him a dirty look, but Peter ignores him.

“Matt,” he says finally. “My name is Matt.”

“What an excellent start. And as I assume we've already said, I'm Tony and this is Peter. You've been here for a week, mostly unconscious with a head injury.”

“A week?” he asks, the heartrate on the monitoring spiking. “I have to go,” he says, pulling the sheet off and attempting to stand up. Peter's kind of impressed he's managed to get that far with two broken arms, but the guy won't be going anywhere, not connected to all the wires and tubing.

And then there's the little matter of him not being able to see.

He gets as far as swinging his legs over the side of the bed and his face goes white. It's only thanks to Peter's quick reflexes that he's able to catch the man, Matt, before he passes out face first onto the floor.

Tony helps him lay him down again, and the monitors stop screaming after a second.

“That was a poor choice Matthew,” Tony sighs, when the man opens his eyes again. “You've been unconscious for a week. Your muscle mass would have deteriorated from that alone, but you've got broken bones, internal injuries, and soft tissue damage to worry about as well.”

Matt tilts his head and considers. “Nightstick fractures in both arms, four ribs fractures, but

thankfully no punctured lung, carpal and metacarpal fractures in both hands, soft tissue damage to the left knee, and whatever happened to my head.”

Peter is impressed and he can tell Tony is as well.

“What, you have a medical degree or something?” Tony asks.

“Been hurt a lot,” Matt replies, his face guarded. “Am I on painkillers?”

“Yeah, it would be cruel if you weren't.”

“I don't want them,” Matt says immediately. “Stop them.”

“You have a fractured skull,” Peter protests. “And like nine other broken bones.”

“This isn't a hospital, I didn't consent to any of this, and I'm sure no one has on my behalf.”

“Fine,” Tony agrees. “But there's a doctor coming, the one who's been overseeing your care, and if you die before she gets here she's gonna be pissed. So just lay there for a little while longer.”

He presses a few buttons on an infuser and one of the drips stops. “There, no painkillers. Anything else you want me to stop?”

“Nagging,” Matt mutters.

Tony snorts and Peter bites his cheeks to keep from smiling.

“Do you want some water or something?” Peter offers, looking at Tony to make sure it's okay.

Matt hesitates. “Yes. Please,” he adds.

Peter busies himself with getting a cup and filling it with water and grabbing a straw from a nearby cupboard. The guy has two broken arms after all, and won't be able to bring it to his mouth.

Behind him, Tony's started interrogating Matt.

“So, how are you feeling?” Tony asks casually.

“Head hurts. I'm hungry. I feel gross. Mostly fine though.”

“Really? I thought you'd be a little more concerned about the vision loss.”

Peter turns around in time to see Matt freeze.

“What?” he whispers.

“The skull fracture,” Tony gestures. “It was at the base of the skull, and that area can affect the optic nerve. In your case, vision problems are almost certain, at least until the swelling goes down more. Peter already noticed you weren't tracking him, but because you didn't seem bothered, either you're in worse shape than we thought, or you were already blind to begin with. Which leads me to wonder, who the hell beats up a blind homeless man and leaves him to die in a dumpster?” Tony concludes, leaning back in his chair.

Peter pulls the rolling table up and places the cup of water and straw on it. Tony was savage.

“Right in front of you man,” he says, wondering if that's enough to help him find it or if the guy needs him to poke the straw in his mouth. He's never met a blind person before.

Matt's eyes are closed and he's lying back against the pillows. "You know," he says wryly, "You're not the first person to say that to me." He finds the straw without even opening his eyes and drains the cup in a couple of seconds. Peter is impressed.

"How long have you been legally blind?" Tony asks.

"Since I was nine," Matt replies.

"How much vision do you have left?"

"None. But I had none before, so..." he trails off.

"Friday, with the addition of a name and an identifying feature, can you figure out Matt's last name?" Tony asks.

There's a brief pause before Friday replies.

"Matthew Murdock, born and raised in Hell's Kitchen. Graduated summa cum laude from Columbia University. Formerly of Nelson and Murdock, a small law company he started with his best friend. Up until recently, Matthew rented an apartment on the top floor of a building in Hell's Kitchen, but was unable to continue paying rent without an income."

Matt doesn't say anything and doesn't seem phased by a voice speaking from the ceiling.

"Not entirely true," he mutters.

"He's right," Friday continues. "I found a bank account in his name that contains more than a quarter of a million dollars. It seems the money was left to him in a will, but he hasn't touched it."

Peter whistles. "Damn, you know how many computers that could buy? Real ones, not dumpster computers."

Matt frowns and opens his eyes again, looking almost in Peter's direction. "Was that why you found me? You were looking for a computer in the garbage?"

"Yeah," Peter says defensively. "I've found things in dumpsters before."

Matt laughs a little, the motion paining him. "Oh kid, not in Hell's Kitchen. If you're lucky the only thing you'll find is garbage."

"Oh, so half dead homeless men are still near the ideal end of the list?" Tony quips. "I'd hate to see what you think of as a terrible find."

"I include myself in that," Matt says quietly.

"Boss, Dr Cho is in the building," Friday interrupts, giving them less time to ponder what exactly Matt meant by that.

"The kid's right though. That's more than enough money to pay for rent. Why were you living on the street?"

Matt scowled. "I hardly think that's any of your business."

"Oh, it is when it means Peter finds you half dead in a dumpster and calls me, scared out of his mind," Tony snaps.

Peter wants to protest, but he doesn't think either of them will listen.

They're still bickering when Dr Cho enters the room, neither of them noticing her. She nods to Peter. They spent enough time together in the past week that Peter has gotten to know her a bit, and he admires the hell out of her work. She wasn't able to use any of her cutting edge technology on Matt, because that sort of thing wasn't exactly FDA approved, and without his consent, she wasn't willing to risk it. She still knew an awful lot about trauma medicine though, and between her and the neurosurgeon Tony had contacted, Matt had been in good hands.

"Mr Murdock, I hear," she says loudly, interrupting Tony's protests about blueberries. Peter didn't even know how they'd gotten to that topic. "Friday briefed me in the elevator. It's good to see you awake."

Matt frowns. "Matt."

"Of course. I also hear you're blind, which isn't a recent development from the head injury, which makes my job a bit easier."

Matt's still frowning.

"Would you be alright if I examined you? I want to make sure your neurological function is intact."

Matt seems to realize he won't be getting out of this so easily. Peter's pretty sure the memory of attempting to get up ten minutes ago is still fresh in his mind. "I guess."

"Would you like me to ask Mr Stark and Mr Parker to leave?"

Matt glances in their direction. "Peter can stay. Stark, get out," he orders.

Tony scoffs, but holds his hands up. "Whatever man. Let me know if you need anything doc," he says, and with that, he's gone.

Dr Cho runs Matt through a bunch of tests that Peter recognizes from having them performed on him more than once. Matt doesn't do quite as well as Peter has, probably due to the skull fracture. He knows who he is, who the president is, and basic facts, but does less well on recalling the three words Dr Cho gave him. He gets two out of three, which isn't bad. Testing his pupils is apparently out of the question, along with a few of the other tests that are visual. From there she moves on to tests Peter doesn't recognize. It takes her about half an hour, during which she pokes part of Matt with sharp objects or dull things, get him to tell her which part she's touching, has him flex and relax various joints, and a variety of other things that Peter has no clue what they mean. From there, Dr Cho steps back and looks at him.

"I can't test your motor function," she admits, "Mostly because you can't walk, and I don't even want you to try getting up right now."

Peter huffs, and while Matt's head jerks up, Dr Cho doesn't appear to have heard him.

"You're doing pretty well considering the seriousness of your injuries. I'm fairly certain that if you'd been sighted before, you'd be facing significant visual impairments now. You seem to have a few memory problems, but that should go away with time as well. For now what your body needs is rest. I see that your painkillers have been stopped," she notes, nodding towards the infuser that Tony poked at earlier.

“Don't like drugs,” Matt says, tight-lipped.

“Understandable, but you're not breathing deeply enough because of the broken ribs. The painkillers allowed you to take deep enough breaths. If you continue to breathe shallowly you could end up with pneumonia, which is really the last thing you need. I'd like you to reconsider.”

Matt hesitates for a second before shaking his head.

“It's up to you, but I'm going to warn you now that getting pneumonia with your broken ribs would be much more unpleasant. To help prevent that, I want you to practice taking five deep breaths every hour. Friday can set a timer if you need to be reminded. Other than that, I want you eating high calorie meals and staying in bed. You need rest to allow yourself to heal. I know that Mr Stark is willing to let you stay here and recover for as long as it takes. I suggest you take advantage of that, at least until you're back on your feet, in all senses of the word.” She pauses, maybe waiting for Matt to say something, but he doesn't. “Is there anyone you would like us to contact?” she asks finally.

Matt just shakes his head. “No,” he says softly.

Dr Cho nods. “I'll be back tomorrow to see how you're doing. Peter, you should be getting home; it is a school night after all.”

She's right. It's nearly 10pm.

He shoves his math textbook and his notes into his backpack and tries to text Aunt May with one hand. “I'll be back tomorrow, if that's okay,” Peter says to Matt. At first he thinks Matt is going to refuse, but after a second his shoulders slump and he just nods.

Peter heads up to the roof as Dr Cho goes over one last thing with Friday, something about antibiotics, and that's all he hears before the elevator doors close.

Chapter 4

When Peter gets home that night, he looks up Matthew Murdock instead of doing his homework. He doesn't find much on google that Friday didn't tell them, but he does find some newspaper articles about Nelson and Murdock, the law firm that he had. Matt is the Murdock half, obviously, and from what he can gather, Franklin is the Nelson half, or Foggy as he's known to his friends. Their firm was integral in the case against Wilson Fisk, and more recently, defended Frank Castle, aka the Punisher. For such a small firm, they seemed to get involved in big cases.

With some more searching, Peter finds that Nelson is now employed at a different law firm, a fancy one that sounds like Peter would have to pay just to say the name. It's located in Midtown, almost on the border of Midtown and Hell's Kitchen, not far from where Peter found Matt in a dumpster. What had happened between two best friends that Matt didn't even want Nelson to know that he'd nearly died? Does he have any right to interfere?

He hears Aunt May brushing her teeth, and turns the light out before she can see and ask him what's so important that he's awake late on a school night.

The excuse of 'Mr Stark' only works so many times before she narrows her eyes and starts muttering about child labour laws, and Peter does not want a repeat of last month. Tony thought it was hilarious, sure, but Peter nearly passed out from the worry.

After she passes his room, pausing at his door for a second before continuing down the hall, Peter climbs back out of bed to turn the computer off.

The next day after school he takes the train to Manhattan, but instead of heading to the Tower, he somehow ends up outside a terrifying and expensive looking office building. It's where Franklin Nelson works, and Peter's not sure if the man even cares about Matt anymore, but what Tony said a week ago is still sticking in his mind, about how some people went missing and no one looked. Peter just wanted to know that eventually, someone would have come looking for Matt.

He's kind of surprised that no one tries to kick him out when he gets in the elevator, and he makes it all the way to the reception desk before anyone tries to talk to him.

“Can I help you?” the secretary asks. The sign on her desk says Pam.

“I'm here to speak with a Mr Nelson,” Peter tells her, trying to sound certain about the whole thing.

“Regarding?”

“A Mr Murdock,” Peter tells her. He thinks that she recognizes the name, because she smiles at him and pushes a button on her headset.

“Take a seat please, I'll let you know when he's ready,” Pam tells him.

He could still hear the conversation if he tried, but he doesn't, and instead tries to figure out how much one of the lawyers makes an hour. Maybe he's heading down the wrong career path. Science is great, but hardly makes you rich.

Next time he looks up, Pam is standing in front of him. “He's ready for you. If you would follow me.” She leads him down a hallway and to a room with a fancy sign, proclaiming it the office of Franklin P Nelson. Peter wonders what his middle name is. Surely not Peter. Pam opens the door to let him in and then disappears, probably back to her desk to do whatever secretaries did all day.

Everything in the office is made out of glass, with no signs of fingerprints anywhere. Peter wonders how often it's cleaned. The man behind the desk has hair that's almost too long for him to belong there, like he's trying to hang on to the days when he had his own firm.

Nelson frowns. “Who are you?”

“I'm Peter, Peter Parker, but that's not really important. Do you know Matt Murdock?”

Nelson's eyes narrow. “Yes. Did he send you?”

“No, no,” Peter says quickly. “He doesn't know I'm here. I just thought you might want to know that he's doing okay. I mean, mostly. He was kind of beat up, we think, we're not really sure because he doesn't remember, but everything's going to heal.”

“Beat up?” Nelson repeats. He doesn't seem as shocked as Peter had expected.

“Yeah I uh, found him in a dumpster.”

“You found *Matt* in a dumpster?” Nelson echoes, placing emphasis on the name.

Peter is unsure what he's asking. “Yes? I said that, didn't I.”

“Sorry,” Nelson's face softens. “Is he okay?”

Peter shrugs. “I mean, he got a skull fracture. If he hadn't already been blind, he would have lost his sight, so...”

Nelson's eyebrows go up at that. “Really?”

Peter scratches his head. “Probably? It's hard to tell, but apparently with that kind of fracture, a lot of people have vision impairments afterwards. We thought that's what happened to him at first, until he woke up and told us he was already blind.”

“He's okay otherwise?” Nelson prompts.

“Some broken bones. He didn't need surgery though.” Peter's not sure what Nelson is looking for, but he doesn't think he has it.

“You have a cell phone?” Nelson asks him, digging in a pocket.

Peter scoffs. “Yeah man, I've got a cell phone.”

Nelson pulls out a card, the text on it gold and embossed. Hella expensive, Peter guesses. “My cell number is on there. Can you keep me updated? Nothing that would be too private, but just... let me know that he's okay, please.”

Peter's ready to say no, but when he looks back up, Nelson looks heartbroken. Geez. He can't say no to that.

“I guess,” he sighs.

“Thank you. And... maybe don't tell Matt you came to see me. He'd probably get upset with both of us, and with him recovering, that's probably not the best idea.”

Peter can tell when someone is lying to him, and this is it, but he's not going to argue because he did come against Matt's wishes. Whatever. The man wasn't in a hospital because of him, so 50% wasn't bad, right?

He nods, and lets himself out.

He's only a few blocks from the Tower, and walks instead of swinging there.

It's kind of weird going in the front door instead of the roof access, but he's also never realized just how many doors his access pass can open. It makes him curious about what doors, if any, are off limits to him. He still hasn't been on all the floors of the Tower, or even seen most of the labs, and he wonders if Tony is really that trusting of him.

Matt's awake when Peter gets there, poking at a tablet that Tony probably gave him. It doesn't seem to be going well though, because Matt's heart rate is elevating and he's swearing under his breath. Did Tony forget the guy was blind already?

“Hey Matt,” Peter greets. “It's me, Peter.”

Matt tilts his head in Peter's direction. “Hi. Are you any good with electronics?”

Peter scoffs. “Considering I built my computer out of parts I found in the garbage, yeah, I'd say I'm pretty good.”

“Can you figure out how to set up the accessibility functions? Stark apparently seems to think that it's intuitive enough that you don't need sight to set them up, despite the fact that you only need to enable them if you can't see.”

He sounds frustrated, and Peter can't blame him.

He takes the tablet, swipes through a few screens, and finds what he thinks Matt wants. The tablet

immediately starts speaking, in a voice similar to Friday's. What was it with Tony and accents?

“Still don't know why he thought a tablet would be a good idea,” Matt mutters.

“It's got Netflix?” Peter offers, recalling one of the icons he'd seen. “Don't they have the video descriptions?”

“For some things,” Matt agrees. “Not much. But I also don't have the attention span for anything right now.”

“The head injury?” Peter asks.

Matt nods, and Peter makes a knowing sound. “I've had my fair share of concussions. Probably nowhere near as bad as what you're going through, but I know it can't be fun.”

“My body wants to sleep, my mind can't focus, and yet there's still this... nervous energy that I can't get rid of. Like too much caffeine.”

Surprisingly, Peter knows all about that.

“You bring homework again today?” Matt asks.

Peter's surprised he knew about that. “Yeah. Who told you?”

Matt smiles a little. “I've been talking to Friday. I was worried that you were just sitting at my bedside and not doing anything, but she tells me you've been busy.”

Peter nods a split second before he remembers Matt can't see it. “Yeah.”

Matt smiles more broadly. “Good. You get started on that, I think... I think I'm going to nap.” It was as if the admission pained him, and Peter realizes, it probably has.

Peter helps him recline the bed a bit, the controls indistinguishable from each other. Peter wonders if they can stick braille or something to them, so Matt can be more independent.

Then he settles in with Spanish, which, ugh.

Chapter 5

Here's the thing- Matt's not stupid. He's also not completely reckless with his life, because suicide is still a sin, no matter how you spin it to make it look like a sacrifice.

So he doesn't needlessly endanger his life, no matter how it may appear. He doesn't want to die. He doesn't. The city needs him.

The memories he has of that night, however few and scattered and impossible to clearly differentiate, one thing is still certain- he hadn't expected to make it out.

So waking up in a hospital like environment, well, that was unexpected. He says hospital *like* because it wasn't a hospital, it was just similar. Some of the smells were the same, the disinfectant and sterility, but there wasn't the smell of other people, of death and unwashed bodies and bodily fluids. It smelled like a hospital wanted to smell like, but never was able.

So there was that.

There was also the fact that there was a kid sitting next to him, late teens maybe, that jumped up when he started moving, and then panicked. Teenagers.

“Mr Stark!” the kid yells, getting up. “I mean, Tony! Friday, can you get him?”

Someone who's not in the room replies, a female voice with an accent, maybe Irish, he can't tell. “He's on his way Peter. Remain calm.”

Matt groans. The combination of Stark and Tony means Tony Stark, which means Iron Man, which means *fuck*.

He shifts on the bed and registers his arms are covered with something. They hurt too, but not acutely, like through a haze.

The kid, Peter the voice said, speaks again. “Hey man, it's cool. You're okay. I mean, you're not okay, but you will be. Remember me? I found you in a dumpster and you punched me. Don't worry about that though, it's cool. I get punched a lot.”

Matt doesn't remember that. He opens his eyes, and there's a second where he forgets that he's blind, just like there is every day when he wakes up. His eyes hurt, or more accurately, his face hurts, specifically around his eyes. Bruises, probably.

“Hey, I'm Peter,” the kid says. Matt tries to track him in the room, but he must have been medicated, because he's having a hard time discerning anything. “It's not a hospital, promise,” Peter tells him. “I know you didn't want that.”

“Where?” he croaks out. How long has he been out for? His voice sound terrible.

“Oh, Avengers Tower.”

Matt groans again. He'd suspected that, but there was always the hope that he was wrong.

A second later, he realizes that Peter is waving a hand in front of his face, which means he knows. Shit.

Stark arrives, Matt tries to get up and nearly passes out, a doctor arrives and examines him, and he finds out just how fucked up he is. Not as bad as he expected, but the head injury is a surprise. He's had head injuries before, of course, but never one that left him unconscious for a week and led to a serious deficit. If he hadn't been blind already, it's likely he would have lost most, if not all of his vision as a result.

With the painkillers leaving his system, he's able to make more sense of his surroundings

Peter leaves, after Dr Cho reminds him it's a school night. The kid doesn't go down in the elevator though, he goes up, and Matt wants to track him, but he gets distracted by Dr Cho speaking to the voice in the ceiling about antibiotics.

Friday, the voice's name is Friday. Matt's not sure if that's a reference to something, or if the person it is based on was named Friday, and he's not sure he wants to know.

"Matt," Dr Cho says gently.

"Yeah?"

"I've got up a reminder with Friday for you to do the breathing exercises every hour. She won't wake you up if you're sleeping, but if you're awake, she'll make sure you don't forget. Do you have any questions?"

Matt hesitates, but then shakes his head. "No. Thank you," he adds, because he knows how much he owes to her. Or maybe he doesn't quite know, but he's starting to realize the extent of it.

"Okay. I'll be back tomorrow, but Friday can contact me if you have any questions before then, or if you're not feeling well. I'm glad you're finally starting to feel better."

Matt attempts a smile, but she's gone before he's sure if his face listened or not.

He drifts off shortly after.

He wakes up a few times that first night, disoriented and lost, but Friday's voice gently reminds him where he is and what happened. It must be part of her programming.

When he wakes up in the morning, there's a nurse who introduces herself as Abby. Apparently she's been taking care of him for the past week. She's nice enough and highly skilled, but Matt still doesn't know how to feel about being so exposed to someone he knows nothing about. He was never good with feeling vulnerable, especially after Stick taught him that weakness would be his undoing.

She checks over his wounds, of which there are a surprising amount, and coaxes him into taking some Tylenol, which he normally wouldn't even consider, but everything hurts and something has to give.

He dozes on and off most of the day, doing breathing exercises when he's prompted. They hurt like hell, of course, but he knows pneumonia will be worse, and he wants to avoid that at all costs. He eats when food is put in front of him, if it can even be called that, but eating is exhausting and he just as soon falls asleep.

Peter comes back in the afternoon, after school, Matt assumes. By then he's only gotten frustrated with the tablet Tony stopped by to give him, which doesn't have any of the accessibility features enabled.

Peter helps him switch them on, but by then he's tired again. It's not really fair to Peter, who came all this way to sit with him, but he can't really help it. Although Matt's not sure how far Peter came, or where he lives or goes to school, or anything about him.

“You bring homework again today?” he asks.

Peter's surprised. “Yeah. Who told you?”

Matt smiles. “I've been talking to Friday. I was worried that you were just sitting at my bedside and not doing anything, but she tells me you've been busy.”

Matt thinks Peter nods right before he says it out loud. “Yeah.”

Matt smiles again. “Good. You get started on that, I think... I think I'm going to nap.”

Peter helps him recline the bed and Matt drifts off as Peter pulls something out of his backpack.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Matt wakes up and Peter is still there.

Matt's a bit surprised, but he's even more surprised to find that Peter is surprised that *he's* surprised.

It's all very confusing, especially for someone with a head injury.

“Why are you always here?” Matt asks. “Why don't you go home?”

Peter shrugs but doesn't narrate it. “I dunno. It's kinda lonely at home. It's just me and my aunt, and she works, so I'm usually home on my own. It's better here, because there's always someone around, and I like that. And right now, I think you need company most of all.”

“I just sleep. For a week I was completely unconscious.”

“Mostly, not completely,” Peter corrects, and Matt doesn't even dwell on that because he can't.

“Why did you come back?” Matt asks quietly, not entirely sure he wants the answer.

“Because I found a half dead homeless guy in a dumpster and it turns out the guy was blind. I wanted to make sure he didn't die, I don't know, kind of like you get invested in a sad kitten you find in a gutter or something.”

“I'm not homeless,” Matt says, because he doesn't know what else to say to that, so focusing on the one thing he can answer is easier. “I'm not homeless. I have a place.”

“Where you live?” Peter asks.

Matt scrunches up his face. “No,” he admits. The office is still there, but it's not for living in. Right now, it's not even for working in, because to do that, he'd need a partner and a secretary, and he has neither of those things. But more than that, the office is so empty, and every time Matt goes there or even thinks about it, he has flashes of what has been and what could have been.

But Foggy has moved on, gotten a job at a real firm, and Karen has switched to journalism, and she's good at it, she really is, Matt is happy for her, but he can't help but feel left behind. It's probably his own fault, no, it definitely is, but there was a part of him that hoped Foggy would never leave, that they'd always be together like Maverick and Goose. (“Goose died,” Matt hears himself say, only moments after meeting Foggy, and he's glad it hasn't come to that, he's so glad.)

So he doesn't work, and he can't go home, and he spends his nights fighting criminals and his days sleeping and meditating and patching himself up in abandoned buildings that haven't been reclaimed and torn down or fixed yet. It's not a sustainable life, but it's all he thinks he can manage, at least for the time being.

Then he ends up in way over his head and everything goes wrong and he ends up in yet another dumpster, he's not sure how he keeps ending up in dumpsters, and he thinks that maybe he won't make it out of this one.

“Matt?” Peter's asking him something, probably has been for a while, but Matt was too deep in his own head to hear him.

“Yeah?”

“I just asked if you were okay. You looked...” Peter searches for a word. “Lost.”

“I'm okay,” Matt assures him. He isn't, not entirely and he's sure Peter knows that, but he hopes it can be contributed to being homeless, blind, and now injured, rather than something else.

His mind wanders again, to what it's like out there, with Daredevil being absent for so long. He wonders if Foggy has noticed, if he cares, if he's wondering where Matt is, if he's alright. He wonders how Claire has been now that she doesn't have to care for him so often. He knew that she was heading home to spend some time with her mother in Harlem, and he was happy for her about that, and told her so. He wonders if she's still there. He hopes she's enjoying herself, having some time just for her.

And then there's Karen, who hasn't spoken to him since his announcement at Christmas. She told him that she needed time, and he gave it to her. She's working as a journalist now, probably in Ben's old office, because that seems like the kind of thing that would happen for her. It seems right.

He's not sure if he wants it known that he's been incapacitated, and he's not sure if he wants them to care. They all left for valid reasons, and Matt doesn't want to reel them back in just because he got hurt and they feel guilty. That's exactly why he pushed them away in the first place, so they wouldn't get hurt like this anymore.

And it worked, but he still feels empty. Stick told him the soft things would strangle him, and he didn't listen, did he? He got attached, to Elektra, to having a life outside what he did at night, to having friends and people he cared about and material things. And now he has none of that.

“You sure you're okay Matt?” Peter asks again. He sounds worried. Matt forgot what it was like to have people worried about you.

“Yeah, just... thinking. About things that I've lost, and things that I still have, and things I've gained.”

He thinks Peter smiles, but it's hard to tell. “Yeah, I know something about that,” he agrees, and there's something more there, something he's not saying, but the kid is allowed to have secrets and Matt doesn't push.

“What homework are you doing today?” Matt asks, changing the subject.

“Spanish,” Peter sighs. “It's the only class I'm not acing. Well, this semester anyway, and two of the other classes are science and math, so it's not like I'm acing all of them, because I've got English too, and that always manages to bring down my GPA, but this semester I'm doing alright.”

“Spanish?” Matt asks.

“Yeah.”

Matt grins. “Creo que puedo ayudarte con eso.”

AKA “I think I can help you with that.”

“Dude,” Peter says, and there's awe in his voice that he definitely doesn't deserve.

Chapter End Notes

Spanish came from an internet translator.

And look, we have a chapter count now because I finished it!

Chapter 7

Matt is apparently fluent in Spanish, which would have been nice for Peter to know at the beginning of the semester, except he didn't know Matt then, so maybe not. But then maybe if he knew Matt earlier, he could have prevented this whole nearly getting beaten to death thing, so...

Peter is sure he has a point.

Right, the Spanish. So Matt is fluent in Spanish, college apparently, which is helpful for Peter, since it was bringing down his otherwise beautiful GPA more than his 'extracurricular activities' ever could. And college was still a few years away but he'd like to keep his GPA up if he could. It kept Aunt May off his back.

Matt helps him conjugate verbs and string coherent sentences together and adjusts his pronunciation. In return, Peter tells Matt about high school and the trouble he manages to get into, carefully editing all his stories to remove any mentions of Spider-Man.

Matt manages to stay awake for a few hours, and by then it's getting late anyway. Matt even managed to eat some dinner, if it could be called that, since Dr Cho was easing him back into solid foods slowly. He'd only been fed through a tube for a week, so his stomach apparently had to adjust to doing the real thing again. So dinner for him was soup and a shake that was apparently high in calories and all the other nutrients Matt needed. Peter also got soup, and a sandwich and a fruit plate and dessert, which he offered to share with Matt, who only looked queasy and refused. They make it though his homework with time to spare, and Peter is reluctant to leave, despite the fact that the sun has set and Aunt May would be getting home from work soon.

In the end, it's Matt who tells him to go, saying that he wants to sleep and that there's no need for Peter to stay for that.

So he swings home.

The next day is Friday, and he tells Aunt May that he will be staying at a friend's house for the weekend. It's not a lie, it's just that the friend is Tony Stark. It might be his imagination, but he thinks he understands more of Spanish class that day. He also gets his essay back that he wrote the week before at Matt's bedside, about symbolism in *The Great Gatsby*, and he got a pretty good grade considering he didn't care about it at all.

When school is over he takes the train to Manhattan again and swings up to the Tower, letting himself in on the roof and heading down to where Matt is.

He can tell something's wrong before he even gets there. Dr Cho is there, first of all, which is weird because she usually only comes in the morning, while Peter is in school, at least on the weekdays. He can also hear Tony muttering, mostly to himself, something about people who didn't

appreciate his help. That worries Peter a bit, mostly because Matt might not understand that Tony is mostly kidding when he says things like that.

When he rounds the corner and can finally see in the room, Matt is propped up in the bed, looking miserable. The oxygen tubing is back, wrapped around his ears with the prongs stuck in his nose, which worries Peter since it's been gone since Matt started spending a good portion of his time conscious. As he gets closer, he can tell Matt is flushed, and can hear something underneath the whistle of the oxygen, something in Matt's chest that isn't supposed to be there. Is that what pneumonia sounds like? Does Matt have pneumonia?

"Hey," he says, stepping through the door, and Matt's head snaps up like he hadn't heard Peter arrive. Dr Cho and Tony also look at him. "What's up?"

"The idiot got pneumonia, like we told him he would if he didn't take the painkillers, because then he wouldn't breathe deeply with the broken ribs, and look what happened," Tony huffs, throwing his hands around as he speaks.

Peter blinks and Matt just looks tired. Dr Cho ignores Tony, so he's probably been going on about it for a bit now.

"I did the breathing exercises like I was supposed to," Matt says quietly. "Ask Friday."

"It's true boss," Friday chimes in.

Matt coughs then, cradling his broken ribs as he does. He looks miserable, and Peter can't help but feel bad.

"It's alright. It's likely that the pneumonia got a hold while you were still unconscious, and that this couldn't have been avoided no matter what you did. It's why I told Friday you were to be put on antibiotics at the first sign of a fever. I've drawn blood to send to the lab and I've got a sputum sample so we can select ideal antibiotics and not have to worry as much about resistance. For now, you're doing everything you're supposed to be doing," Dr Cho tells Matt, resting a hand gently on his shoulder. "Rest, eat, recover. I know you don't want painkillers, but I've set it up so that you can push a button if the pain gets bad. It's completely up to you. Here's the button," she says, placing it in his hand. "Don't hesitate to use it if you're hurting. There's nothing wrong with admitting you're in pain."

Peter doesn't think that's the main problem Matt is having, but that it's certainly one of them.

"I've talked to Abigail, and she's confident that she can still take care of your needs, but Tony has offered to get another nurse."

Matt shakes his head. "No, I don't."

He's cut off by another cough, and he winces. Peter aches too, just from looking at him.

"I agree with her that she can probably handle it," Dr Cho continues as if Matt hadn't said anything. "Friday will also keep an eye on you and can alert me, Tony, or Abigail if anything changes, and I believe Peter is spending the weekend." She looks at Peter and smiles.

Peter nods. "Yeah. My Aunt knows I probably won't be home til Sunday."

"She knows you're babysitting a homeless man?" Matt asks. There's a hint of a smile on his face.

“Well, no. She knows I’m at a friend’s house, I just didn’t tell her who the friend was. She thinks Tony uses me for child labour,” he explains.

Tony scoffs. “I only wish I did sometimes, I never actually do,” he retorts. Matt looks alarmed.

“He’s kidding,” Peter assures him. He frowns. “Mostly.” He’s not entirely certain.

Matt doesn’t look reassured.

Tony leaves, and Dr Cho hangs around for a while before leaving. Abigail checks in on Matt, takes a set of vitals, and checks on an infusion of what Peter thinks is antibiotics. Peter then assures her that they’ll be alright for a little while on their own, and pulls out the tablet that’s been discarded on the rolling table.

He swipes to Netflix and opens the app, pretending he’s not startled by the audio that tells him what he’s doing every step of the way.

From Matt’s smirk, he doesn’t pretend very well.

“So I know you’re probably not going to stay awake for it, but is there anything you’ve already seen, or want to watch again? I mean, can I say that? Is it okay for me to say that?”

“It’s fine,” Matt assures him, amused. “What is there in the way of old tv shows? There’s a chance I’ve seen those already and wouldn’t mind a rewatch.”

“How old are we talking?” Peter asks, frowning. He’s not sure he can sit through shows that are older than he is.

“Like, pre 2000, early 2000s.”

Peter scrolls through the titles. “Okay, we’ve got Friends, literally all of the Star Treks, Bob Ross, which I feel would be lost on you, Freaks and Geeks, Veggie Tales, oh my god we’re not watching that I don’t care if you want to or not, we’re just not, The X Files, Broadchurch, which isn’t old, but is really good, you know the whole murder mystery thing, very well done, Doctor Who...” he stops when he gets a glimpse of Matt, who looks horrified. “I’m overwhelming you, aren’t I?” he asks. “I’m sorry, really-”

“Just put on Star Trek,” Matt tells him. “Original series.”

“Okay,” Peter agrees, and scrolls back up to it. “Oh, no descriptive video though. Is that a problem?”

“No, I’ve heard them all before. My roommate in college watched them all and described them to me.”

Peter wonders who he’s referring to. Foggy perhaps?

Matt tilts his head towards Peter. “You seen them?”

“Original series, no. Next generation, yes. And I’ve seen the reboot films, of course. They’re pretty good. Way better than the original films, except for The Voyage Home. Best movie ever, honestly. Space whales,” he says seriously.

Matt nods. “Yeah.” Peter isn't sure if he's serious or not until he starts beaming.

Peter rolls his eyes. “Jerk,” he huffs. He props the tablet up on the rolling table so he can see and Matt can hear, and then sits back in the chair. Matt closes his eyes. Peter isn't sure he's still awake, but ten minutes into the first episode, he huffs at something, and Peter realizes he is still conscious, but since he can't see, there's really no point for him to have his eyes open.

Matt does fall asleep during the second episode, wakes up during the third, falls asleep during the fifth, and wakes up during the sixth. At that point, Peter gets them dinner, which is more soup for Matt, and pizza for Peter.

They keep watching episodes late into the night, Matt only somewhat conscious, and Peter falls asleep during one and wakes up to a quiet room, the screen wondering if he's still watching. He scowls at it and presses it off, and climbs into a bed near Matt and curls up, already falling back asleep.

Chapter 8

Matt seems to decline over the weekend, and by Sunday morning, he has a fever of 103 and seems to be hallucinating. Friday alerts Dr Cho, but before she arrives, it's just Peter with him. Tony is out saving Manhattan, or maybe some other section of the world, leaving Peter in charge. Abigail is downstairs with Clint, who may be halfway to bleeding out or could just be complaining for the sake of it, it was hard to tell with that guy.

"I have to go," Matt insists, trying to get out of bed. Peter gently pushes him back into bed, mindful of his ridiculous number of broken things. "They need me."

"No man, you're okay, everything's fine. You're safe, remember?"

Matt doesn't seem convinced.

"Remember me, Peter?"

Matt's face screws up. "Peter?"

"Yeah. I found you in a dumpster. You punched me, remember? Which is fine, we're cool," he adds quickly.

Matt nods. "Right. Thanks for that. Wasn't sure I'd make it out," he says seriously.

Peter realizes this might be the only chance he gets to ask, and although he feels kind of bad about it, he's still going to take it. "How did you end up in the dumpster?" he asks.

"Ninjas," Matt says simply.

"Ninjas," Peter repeats slowly, hoping he misheard.

Matt only nods. "Yup."

"Something you deal with a lot?" Peter asks, trying to untangle the oxygen tubing that Matt had somehow managed to pull away despite both his arms still being in casts.

"More than you'd think," Matt says cheerily.

"Why do you have so many problems with ninjas?" Peter asks, looping the tubing around Matt's ears again.

"I'm Daredevil," Matt tells him.

Peter freezes, his heart skipping at least a few beats.

Matt frowns. "You okay?"

"You're asking me if I'm okay? You're feverish, you have pneumonia, and like thirty broken bones."

"Yeah, but your heart just..." Matt gestures with one casted arm at Peter's chest.

How could he hear that, Peter can barely hear that and it's his own heart. "What, how could you hear that?"

Matt beams. "Daredevil, remember? I have super hearing. That's how I know when people need help."

Peter thinks he's just delusional, that the fever is worse than the monitor says, that maybe Matt's brain has reached the melting point, but then things start to click into place.

Daredevil hasn't been seen for over a week, the same period of time that Matt has been incapacitated. Peter would be willing to bet that Daredevil wouldn't been seen for at least another month, or however long it took for Matt to heal. (A month really was being generous with Matt's healing abilities.)

Then Peter remembers some things about Daredevil that had been in the back of his mind ever since the newspapers had started reporting. There have been reports of the guy fighting with no light, of taking hits that would knock ordinary men down and still going. Some people thought that maybe Daredevil wasn't human, which Peter thinks is ridiculous, of course he's human, they all are except for Thor, who is very obvious about it. Sure, maybe he isn't *just* human, but he's still human.

But not needing light to fight could be because Daredevil is actually blind. Peter still can't explain how he's able to fight even after a normal person would be unconscious or unable to keep going, but of what he knows about Matt so far, it's not out of the question. He's a stubborn man, that's for sure.

Matt's build is right, based on the footage that Peter has seen. He's a lawyer, and would certainly know about the limitations of the law. Because sure, the law is great, but it fails sometimes. Peter knows that more than most. He would bet Matt does too.

And then there's the insistence about not going to the hospital. At first Peter figured it was because he couldn't afford it. After all, a homeless man wasn't likely to have health insurance. But then when he found out Matt had a quarter of a million dollars stashed away, it kind of threw that theory out the window. Of course, even that amount of money couldn't last forever, and Peter was sure the kind of injury Matt had could go through it easily, but there still seemed to be something else he didn't know about. Being Daredevil could explain it. Doctors always asked questions, questions that Matt couldn't answer without either lying or letting something slip about having a secret identity. The sheer amount of scars he had would either have them assuming abuse or self harm, neither of which Matt could prove were wrong.

It would also explain how Matt came to be in the dumpster, beat half to death, and why he insisted on knowing the circumstances of how he was found when he woke up. He had to know which part to play.

Matt's frowning now. "Peter?"

"Yeah?"

"It's a secret," he says seriously. "You can't tell anyone."

Peter nods before realizing Matt can't see it, even if he is somehow able to sense it. "Of course man."

Matt's still bright with fever, his chest rattling with every breath, and the monitor just on the border of threatening to beep again, but this response seems to assure him, and he sinks back into the pillows.

"Good. Last time someone found out, it didn't go well," Matt says, sagging visibly, like the admission pains him. Peter wonders who it was. A girlfriend maybe? Someone who questioned the countless scars that Peter has seen scattered across Matt's body in various stages of healing? Surely that couldn't be hidden from someone.

Or maybe just a friend. Foggy perhaps? Maybe that was what split them apart, a secret identity driving a wedge in between them that even years of friendship couldn't prevent.

It's not for him to know, but he can't help but wonder if the same thing is going to happen to him if (*when*) people close to him find out what he's been hiding.

Dr Cho arrives then, all business and bustle. She moves around them with a grace Peter still hasn't managed to develop despite enhanced reflexes and coordination, and she does it all in heels. She gives Matt a drug to bring down the fever, and switches his antibiotic based on the results of the blood work she sent off a few days prior.

Otherwise she says Matt is doing well.

Peter is skeptical.

Abigail arrives too, having been occupied with keeping Hawkeye's blood where it belongs, which took priority over Matt, who was feverish but still intact. Apparently Barton was on the side of actually bleeding out this time instead of just exaggerating. It was always one extreme or another with that guy, never in between. She too seems to think Matt is doing okay.

Maybe they're right. Fever is intended to kill off the bacteria, until a certain point, and maybe Matt hasn't reached that yet. Sure he seems a bit out of it, but maybe he just gets that way when he has a fever. Some people do.

God, Peter is worrying about this far too much. If the professionals say that Matt's doing okay, then he should believe them. He's in high school, what does he know.

Maybe this is what it's like to be responsible for another person, like how his aunt is responsible for him.

It's awful.

Half an hour later, Matt's fever is below 100 and he seems lucid, if not exhausted. Peter puts on another episode of Star Trek as Matt drifts off, and Peter wonders if he'll even remember their conversation the next time he wakes up.

Chapter 9

Early afternoon finds Matt conscious and alert and complaining about the current episode of Star Trek.

“I mean, Bones dies? There's a rabbit? None of it makes any sense, and I doubt it would help any if I could see it,” he complains.

“Dude, you're telling me. I can see it and it makes no sense. Are all old shows like this?”

Matt smirks. “I think some of the old Doctor Who might be worse. I recall a monster made out of bubble wrap.”

“Did someone tell you that or did you actually see it yourself? Because I'm not sure that's true.”

“I wasn't always blind, remember. I watched some of the old episodes before I lost my sight, and let me tell you, there was definitely a creature made of bubble wrap.”

“I'll take your word for it,” Peter says skeptically.

They go back to watching for a bit. Bones isn't dead, of course, because where would a ship be without its doctor, and the whole thing turns out to just be a misunderstanding.

Netflix checks in to see if they're still watching, and before Peter can say yes, they were, Matt stills.

At first Peter thinks something's wrong, but none of the monitors are yelling, and Matt isn't turning blue, so it's not something to do with his lungs.

“Hey, you okay?” Peter asks.

Matt blinks.

“Was there a point where...” he falters, seemingly unsure how to say it. “When I had a fever, did I say anything that seemed...”

Oh. Peter knows where he's going. He wants to know if Peter knows his secret identity, but if the whole thing was only a fever dream, he doesn't want to reveal his secret identity while asking Peter if he knew it.

“You told me you're Daredevil,” Peter says bluntly, so they can get the damn thing over with.

Matt coughs, and it's probably unrelated to the pneumonia, but the pneumonia kicks him in the ass and the whole thing is drawn out into a coughing fit that most definitely hurts. Hell, it hurts Peter, and he's not the one with broken ribs.

“Pain meds?” Peter offers, holding up the button that the doc set up yesterday for occasions just like this.

Matt looks like he's considering it, but just as he starts to shake his head, Peter pushes it.

“Whoops,” he says.

Matt narrows his eyes, but some of the lines on his face smooth out. “Punk,” he mutters.

“Yeah, well. Like the doc said, you're not going to get better if you're afraid to breathe.”

“Are we just not going to talk about this?” Matt asks.

Peter shrugs. “Not if you don't want to.”

Matt tilts his head. “Really?” he asks, incredulous.

“Hey man, you're entitled to your secrets. I've only known you for a week, and in that time saved your life and prevented you from dying alone in a dumpster, so you know, whatever. It's cool.”

Matt scoffs. “Really?”

Peter doesn't say anything, just grins. He reconsiders. “I'm smiling at you. Like, really smugly.”

“I know,” Matt says.

“Really? How?” Peter asks, and then wishes he hadn't, because they just went over this. “I mean, if you don't mind.”

“I can't see,” he says bluntly. “We've already established that like five times. But when it happened, whatever it was, all of my other senses were dialed up. I can hear your heartbeat, I can feel air currents and changes in temperature that indicate where someone is in a room. I can taste every ingredient that goes into preparing a dish. My balance is so finely tuned that I have greater control over my body than I could have ever hoped to. But for all the good those things do, they still don't make up for being blind.”

“What do you mean, when it happened? Did this happen when you lost your sight?”

“Yeah. Some sort of chemical spill. My vision was gone, but I got... everything else. Not really a fair trade, but then life rarely is, so...” he shrugs.

“Radioactive waste gave you super powers?” Peter breathes. “Man, that is so cool.”

Matt frowns. “No, I didn't say it was radioactive. It might have been, but I don't know. I was only nine at the time.”

“Sounds like it was radioactive,” Peter says knowingly. “That's how all the people get superpowers.”

Matt raises an eyebrow. “Really?”

“Well, it's how the Hulk did, and possibly Captain America, and maybe some others. I don't really know.”

Matt looks thoughtful. “So what about other people? How do they get superpowers if not for radioactive waste?”

“Well, Iron Man isn't really a superpower. That's just Tony being a genius and building armor, which I guess you could say is a superpower if you wanted to. Hawkeye is just really really good

with a bow and arrow, but no evidence of radioactive waste or anything there. Black Widow, who knows, because she terrifies me and also I've heard six completely different stories. Thor isn't human, so he doesn't count. Ant Man is another case of no super powers, just a super suit, same with War Machine and Falcon. Scarlet Witch involved aliens, same with Vision. No one knows about Black Panther, and as for Spider-Man-

He cuts himself off, painfully aware that he's saying too much.

"What about Spider-Man?" Matt asks.

"I don't know, I'm rambling, ignore me."

"Yeah, but you sounded pretty sure," Matt says, and there's something in his voice that makes Peter wonder if he knows. He has no idea how the man would know, but maybe it's another one of his super senses, the ability to just know things.

"I heard genetic modification," Peter says finally, searching Matt's face for some sign of a reaction. He's not sure what he expects, but there isn't anything there.

"Well, you'd know better than me," Matt says.

"What?" Peter asks, his heart skipping a beat.

Matt frowns, and Peter could have kicked himself. Matt can hear heartbeats.

"Well, you seem pretty up to date on science. The last science class I took was in grade 11, and I'm sure things have changed since then."

"Oh." He tries not to let the relief show in his voice. "I guess you're right, when you put it that way."

Matt frowns deeper, if it were possible. "Are you okay Peter?"

"Yeah I'm fine. I just... I'm Spider-Man," he blurts out.

"You're what?"

Shit, shit, there's no taking it back now, why did he say that. "I thought you knew and that you were pretending not to for the sake of secret identities but I guess you didn't know but I just told you so now you do know and why do I keep doing these things to myself, I'm just going to slide onto the floor now okay."

He fully intends to, he's already sliding off the chair and he's ready for the floor to swallow him up, when Matt clamps a death grip around Peter's arm.

Peter stares at it for a minute, mostly because there are broken bones in there and that should hurt a hell of a lot, how is Matt doing that?

"Peter," he says firmly, especially for someone whose lung capacity is maybe at 60%. "It's fine. Now please stop trying to let the floor swallow you up so I can let go of you."

Peter scrambles out of Matt's grip. "Sorry, of course, sorry."

"Stop apologizing. It's fine. I might not have known today, but I was getting close to figuring it out."

“Really?”

“Yeah. You almost never come in the building through the front door. It's always from the roof.”

“Oh,” Peter says.

“I mean, I didn't immediately assume you were Spider-Man, but I would have figured it out eventually. This just means we can get back to more important things.”

“Important things? Like what?”

In response, Matt leans forwards and confirms that they are still indeed watching Star Trek.

“Captain's log, Star date...”

Okay, Peter can live with that.

Chapter 10

That evening Peter doesn't want to leave. He knows he has to, because he told Aunt May he'd be back, but that doesn't make it any easier to leave Matt, especially knowing what he does.

But after the episode finishes, Peter packs up his things and leaves Matt alone once again, promising to visit after school the next day.

On the train home, Peter pulls out the card he got from the lawyer, Nelson, and stares at it. He adds the contact to his phone and sits there for a good five minutes just thinking about whether he should text him or not. After he decides it would be a good idea, he spends another trying to compose a message that doesn't sound stupid.

Matt's still recovering, but has pneumonia. The doctor says he should be alright, I just thought you'd want to be updated.

He signs it Peter and sends it before he can second guess himself.

He gets a reply only a few minutes later.

Thanks for letting me know.

Peter stares at it for a minute and then shrugs, shoving the phone back into his pocket.

Aunt May is happy to have him home, and tells him about her weekend and then asks him about his. He makes something up and talks about Star Trek and his homework, which he had managed to finish thanks to Matt's help with Spanish.

He's just getting into bed when his phone vibrates again.

Has he mentioned me at all?

Peter thinks. Matt hasn't mentioned him by name, only mentioned a friend from college that he

assumes is Foggy. Peter still hasn't worked up the courage to ask if Foggy knows about Matt being Daredevil, and if he does, how he took the news.

He can guess though. And he's not sure he wants to know the answer.

Peter doesn't know what to say, so he doesn't reply.

Chapter 11

At breakfast the next morning, with Aunt May rushing around him getting ready for work, Peter reads an article speculating on the lack of appearances by Daredevil in the recent weeks. The author speculates that perhaps Daredevil has been hurt or even killed, although she adds that it's also possible the man is just taking a vacation. Peter thinks she's hoping that's the case, based on the tone of the article. He wonders what Karen Page would think if she knew Daredevil was a blind man who had been beaten half to death and was recovering from a skull fracture in Avengers tower.

She probably wouldn't believe it.

Aunt May kisses him on the head while he's pondering it and reminds him that she's working late that night, and that there are leftovers in the fridge.

During Spanish class, Peter hears reports of Shocker in Midtown, but he grits his teeth and reminds himself that one of the Avengers can handle it, and that he really can't miss another Spanish class. By English class, the text alert Peter has set up to notify him about Shocker has calmed somewhat, with the latest article detailing a simple takedown by Black Widow and Hawkeye.

Peter gets another text from Foggy after he's gotten off the train and is walking the final length to the apartment. Tony texted him early and told him it wasn't a good day to stop by, so he had planned to do his homework and spend the evening fighting crime.

He's kind of surprised that Foggy texted him again without receiving a reply to the other one, but whatever.

Which hospital is he at? I'd like to visit.

Peter's heart sinks. He thinks back to his visit to the man's office, and sure enough, he didn't mention that Matt wasn't in a hospital, per say. How is he supposed to explain that Matt is in Avengers tower, because the person who found him is actually Spider-Man?

Certainly not through a text.

Maybe you should call me when you get a minute. I'm done class now, so any time is good.

His phone rings only seconds after he sends the text.

“Hello.”

“Is something wrong?” Foggy asks immediately.

“No, everything was fine when I left him yesterday, and I haven't heard anything, so he's fine. No, I just thought it would be easier to tell you than explain through texts.”

“Explain what?”

“So... Matt's not exactly in a hospital.”

“What? You told me he had a skull fracture and countless other injuries, how is he not in a hospital?” He's starting to sound angry.

“He's in the medical wing of Avengers tower,” Peter blurts out. “Under the supervision of a doctor and a nurse.”

“Avengers tower?” Foggy repeats. “I thought you said you found *Matt* in a dumpster.” He stresses Matt's name in a way that makes Peter think he knows about the times when Matt isn't Matt. But if he doesn't know, and Peter mentions it, Matt might actually kill him.

“Yeah, I did, but he told me not to call an ambulance and I kinda panicked so I called Tony Stark instead.”

“Tony Stark?”

Foggy keeps repeating things, and Peter wonders if he realizes he's doing it.

“Yeah, I... I'm interning with him.” It's not untrue. “He showed up and did his superhero thing and got a doctor and a nurse, and then we figured he didn't need to go to a hospital, because honestly, there isn't really any care better than what Tony Stark can buy.”

“He's been in Avengers Tower for two weeks and no one contacted me?”

“Well, I did. After he woke up. He was unconscious for the first week.”

“And you didn't know who he was? How hard is it to identify a blind man?” Foggy demands.

Peter's getting uncomfortable. “We didn't know he was blind before the injury. I told you that kind of skull fracture can cause blindness. Also, I don't really think this is my fault. If he's really that close of a friend how did you not notice he was missing for a week?”

There's only heavy breathing at the other end of the line.

“Matt has a habit of disappearing for a few days,” Foggy says finally, more calmly. “We're not that close anymore, but I still keep tabs on him. So while I don't visit him daily or anything, I do worry about him and care for him very much.”

“We asked him when he woke up,” Peter blurts out. “We asked him if he wanted us to contact anyone for him. He said no. There was also evidence that he'd been homeless. Malnourishment,

lots of bruises in various stages of healing, that sort of thing.”

“What,” Foggy whispers. “No, he has a place. His apartment. Why would he...”

“Listen, I don't pretend to know about your relationship, but I'm telling you what I know now. He has never mentioned you by name. The only reason I know about you is because there are newspaper articles. That's it.”

“What do you mean by name. Has he mentioned a law partner or a friend or anything?”

“I'm assuming you're the friend who made him watch Star Trek in college,” Peter admits.

Foggy laughs. “Yeah, that's me.” He's quiet for a second. “He really hasn't mentioned me?”

Peter shakes his head, despite knowing the man can't see it. “Sorry.”

Foggy sighs. “I mean yeah, we had a falling out, but I'm still his best friend. I thought he'd know that. I guess he always has been the stupid self hating sacrificial sort of guy.”

Peter squints. He's not sure exactly what that means, but yeah, he can see it.

“Do you... do you think it would be okay if I visited him?”

Peter considers it. Matt hasn't expressly forbade visitors, but he also hasn't expressed an interest in having any. Probably because he thought no one else would want to visit him. “I think it would be okay. Not today though.”

“Right. Tomorrow you think?”

Peter considers it. What the hell. “Sure,” he agrees. “You probably work during the day right? It would have to be after school anyway.”

“I can be done by four,” Foggy tells him.

“Meet you at your office then?” Peter suggests.

“Sure.”

“Okay, bye then.”

Peter thinks he might regret this.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

well today I write the last exam of my undergrad, so have a chapter before that.

As the end of the school day draws closer, Peter starts getting more and more anxious. He wouldn't say he's nervous about the whole thing, but he would really like to run laps or do something that would let him work off the nervous energy he has.

After school he suits up and swings around for a bit. He stops one mugging and helps one older lady carry her groceries up five flights of stairs because the elevator in her apartment isn't working.

It's a slow day.

He finally heads over to Manhattan, stuffing the suit back into his backpack and putting his street clothes on.

He's at the office building by five minutes to four, and Foggy is already waiting outside for him.

"Hey," Peter says. The guy's hair has been cut since the last time Peter saw him, but it's still longer than he'd expect for a guy working at a prestigious law firm.

"Hi Peter."

"You okay to walk?" Peter asks. They can see Avengers Tower from where they're standing, but he's aware that people who have money and can afford to take taxis often like to take them, rather than walk through downtown Manhattan.

Most days anyway.

"Sure," Foggy agrees.

It's a nice day out, just on the cooler side, but with the hope that spring might actually emerge sometime soon. It hasn't snowed in about a month, but the weather has still been hovering around the freezing mark for a few weeks.

It's awkward, because Peter doesn't know if he's supposed to start a conversation or just let the walk happen in silence.

Foggy finally speaks though, asking Peter about school. "So what classes are you taking?"

"Science, math, English, and Spanish."

"So that's what, grade ten?"

Peter nods.

“Got a favourite?”

“Science, for sure. I'm not very good at Spanish, but Matt has been helping me.”

Foggy smiles. “Yeah, he's pretty fluent. Took it in college.”

“Well, it's been lucky for me. When he explains it I can actually understand it. Still not sure why we have to take Spanish, but whatever.”

“A lot of people in New York speak Spanish. Probably less than the number of people who speak Punjabi, but...” he shrugs and trails off.

“Let me guess. You took Punjabi in college?”

“I remember none of it,” Foggy confirms.

“Also, I think New York has more Spanish speakers than Punjabi speakers. Sorry man.”

Foggy huffs out a laugh. “I'll probably live.”

It's not much longer and they're at the Tower. Peter leads the way through the lobby and to the elevator that heads to the private floors. He presses his wallet to the card reader and the elevator dings.

“Hello Peter,” Friday says as they enter.

“Hi Friday. Medical floor please.”

“Of course.”

Foggy's eyes are on him.

“AI,” he explains, and doesn't say anything else.

The rest of the ride is quiet, with only the ding and the doors opening to announce their arrival.

Peter leads the way, Foggy following behind a bit hesitantly, stopping in the doorway when he spots Matt in the bed.

The guy still looks like shit, but it's a hell of a lot better than when Peter found him two weeks ago.

Matt's eyes widen and he peers in their direction. “Foggy?” he whispers.

“Not sure if it's me, huh?”

Matt shakes his head.

“Well, it is.”

“Peter?”

Peter shrugs. “Dunno man.” Matt will see right through it, of course.

Matt narrows his eyes, but Foggy jumps in then and saves Peter from that discussion.

“How the hell did this happen? I was told that they found you in a dumpster. *You* Matthew,” he says meaningfully.

Matt sighs. “Peter knows about me being Daredevil.”

“Oh, okay, so you told this kid who you've known for what, a week? I'm glad you're making friends more quickly, since it only took you how many years until you told me?” Foggy snaps.

Matt looks pained, and Peter wonders if he should leave.

He doesn't though, just keeps watching, like a trainwreck in slow motion.

“I was also told that they asked you if they should call anyone. And you said no. Did you honestly think I wouldn't come?”

“No. I knew you would,” Matt says. “I didn't want you to get dragged back into my life. I know that you don't agree with what I do, and this is really just an extension of that. I didn't want you to feel guilty or pity me or something. You had valid reasons for leaving.”

“Because you pushed me away!”

Matt grimaces.

“Oh, you listen up Matthew Murdock. I know you think that pushing me away will protect me, but it won't. It hasn't. It just means I have to hear about you nearly dying from a kid who walks into my office.”

Matt glares at Peter as Foggy says that, but Foggy doesn't let it weaken his resolve.

“And yes, if you never went out as Daredevil again, I'd be thankful that you were safe, but I know that isn't something I can force you to do. And more than that, I know it isn't something that you'd be happy with. I've accepted that you're not going to stop being Daredevil until you are forced to. And I don't know what will force you to, but I know that none of the options are good. Prison, injury, death- they're all terrible. I don't want any of those things for you Matt. We may have had our disagreements but you are still my best friend. And I hate that I didn't know you nearly died until a week after it happened. You could have died and I never would have known. You could have died with no one ever having found you. I have nightmares that I never see you again, that you just disappear from my life forever and I am left wondering if you're dead or not. It's the not knowing that would kill me Matt, do you understand that? If you don't know, then you can have hope, and hope is dangerous. You of all people should know that too many people in this city die alone with no one to mourn them. Sometimes the people that go missing have no one to look for them. But you have people that care about you Matt. You think Karen wrote those articles about you because she was told to? Hell, her editor shot down two more that she wasn't allowed to publish in addition to the two that she did. Claire and I meet up for drinks once a month. We have a lot in common you know, aside from both knowing you. Did you know she's setting up a clinic in

Midtown for people like you?"

"Like me?" Matt asks. It's the first thing he's been allowed to say throughout Foggy's tirade.

"With powers. Ones who save the city and get beat up on a regular basis. You know, that sort of thing."

Peter thinks this could be helpful for him too, but doesn't say anything in case they both remember he's still in the room and try to kick him out.

"So yes Matt, I would have come if I'd gotten a call. Not out of some sense of misplaced guilt, but because you are still my best friend, even if we've gone through some shit. In fact, you're probably my best friend because we've gone through shit. It's not like you can get through law school with just anyone and still like them afterwards. If that doesn't tear two people apart who are living in a tiny dorm room together, I'm not sure anything will, okay? Not a secret identity, not you getting beaten half to death, nothing. Got it?"

Matt only nods. Peter is pretty sure he has heart eyes.

"I'm gonna hug you now," Foggy tells him.

Matt nods, reaching his arms up. Foggy is careful to not jostle anything or squeeze him too tight, probably mindful of all the injuries the guy has.

Meanwhile, Peter's nearly tearing up in the corner.

He excuses himself before either of them can see (or in Matt's case hear) him cry.

Chapter 13

Foggy finds him in the hallway a bit later. His eyes are a bit red, but Peter doesn't comment, because it would make him a hypocrite.

“He says he's tired and he's gonna take a nap.”

Peter knows this either means Matt is completely exhausted or just overwhelmed with emotion. It's probably a combination of the things.

“Do you know when he'd be able to go back home?” Foggy asks him. “I know you're not a doctor, and you are kind of just a kid, but he said he was ready to go anytime, and I don't value his opinion of his own wellbeing because too often he's overestimated his abilities.”

Peter scratches his head. “I don't really know,” he admits. He knows that the skull fracture is the worst of the injuries, and that broken bones can take around 8 weeks to heal, but he's not sure if Matt needs to be looked after for more time or not. Frankly, from what he knows of Matt just from knowing him for a week, he's surprised Matt has stayed for this long.

He probably would have been discharged from the hospital a long time ago if he'd been in a hospital, but he's not, and Tony would never do something like that. Hell, he'd probably invite Matt to move in.

He already tried to invite Peter, but he had to decline, knowing that Aunt May would not approve of that.

It might be a good thing for Matt, to be around people and support, but Peter knows no one can make him stay. If Matt wants to leave and head back to the streets, even with all his injuries, he's allowed to do that. Peter thinks Foggy wouldn't let him, but Matt is technically allowed.

“I don't wanna screw this up again,” Foggy tells him. “Not that I really did, because we both made mistakes, but I can't help but feeling guilty, which of course he knows, and was the whole reason why he didn't want me to know in the first place.” He sighs. “Friendship is hard man.”

Peter nods. He doesn't really have that many close friends, there's Gwen and MJ and Harry, but he wouldn't say they're anywhere near as close as Matt and Foggy are.

“Would you mind walking me out? I'm sure if I tried to do it on my own Skynet would shoot me for accidentally walking into a restricted area,” Foggy confides.

Peter grins. “Sure man. I should probably be getting home anyway.”

He pushes the button for the elevator.

“Sorry about getting you in the middle of this,” Foggy says as they're waiting. “I'm sure that you never expected any of this when you found him in a dumpster.” He pauses. “I never did ask how you found him. What were you doing?”

“Looking for electronics,” Peter sighs.

Foggy laughs as the elevator arrives and they step in. “Oh man, you're not gonna find anything like that in Hell's Kitchen.”

Peter smiles. “Matt told me the same thing.”

“He would, wouldn't he?” Foggy says. “I just wanted to thank you again, for everything you've done for Matt. Not everyone who found him would have given him a second thought, let alone listened to his wishes and not called an ambulance. From what I've gathered, he seems fond of you, which really is a high compliment coming from him.”

Peter puffs up a bit with the praise.

“He talked about you a lot. Never by name, but he'd mention a friend, or his college roommate, and I knew he was talking about you. I knew it had to be someone special who'd provide a description of all the episodes of the original Star Trek.”

Foggy laughs. “Yeah, but that was mostly because I subjected him to listening to them, so I figured I might as well describe them too.”

They reach the lobby, and Foggy checks his phone. “Damn, that late already? I was supposed to meet Karen at five.”

It's well after 5:30.

His phone rings as he's typing on it, and he picks it up. “Hello Karen, I did not forget, I am on my way right now I promise. Yes, I will buy.”

He hangs up and smiles at Peter. “Thanks for all of this, but I do have to run. You okay to get home on your own?”

Peter snorts. “Yeah man.”

“Thought so. You've got my number if Matt needs anything, okay? I told him I'd try to stop by again in a few days. Give him some time.”

Peter nods, and Foggy is already hailing a cab and sliding in.

On his way home, he checks in on the older woman who he helped carry groceries to her apartment. She's cooking and cooing at her cat, who is sitting on a kitchen table that it's definitely not supposed to be on.

Peter wonders if Aunt May would let him get a cat.

Probably not.

He webs a note about accessibility and getting the elevator fixed to the landlord's door and heads on home.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The next day, Peter is anxious to get to see Matt. He's certain the man will be angry at him, and justifiably so, but he doesn't think he could stand if he never wanted to see him again.

Maybe see isn't the right word.

He takes the train and then swings the rest of the way, practically vibrating in his suit.

Friday has the elevator waiting for him again, and she greets him as he gets in.

“Hey Friday. How's everything going?”

“A suicide bomber killed 14 people in-”

“In the Tower,” he cuts her off. He really doesn't need to hear that.

“Mr Stark has been conscious for 32.7 hours,” she tells him.

Great.

“How has Matt been?”

“Mr Murdock has begun physical therapy today, and has found it tiring.”

Peter pauses getting out of the elevator. Does that mean he's asleep? Does he not want Peter's company?

“He has been asking about you though,” Friday adds.

That decides it then.

Matt is laying in bed when Peter gets there, but he's wearing sweats instead of the pyjamas he'd been wearing up until then. The bruises around his eyes are nearly gone, and he looks better, less like he's about to pass out or die. He might even have gained a pound or so.

Peter's not going to say he looks better because Foggy came to visit, but he wouldn't bet against it either.

“Hey Matt.”

“Peter,” Matt greets. “How was school?”

Peter shrugs. “Nothing interesting. Heard you started PT today.”

Matt nods. “Tony got a physical therapist named Rebecca to come in. I've done a lot of training in my time, but I think today was the hardest.”

Peter winces. "That sucks."

"It's necessary," Matt says instead.

"So... how did things go with Foggy?"

Matt smiles in his direction. "I think you know."

"I have an idea," Peter admits. "I just want to make sure I did the right thing in telling him," he adds.

"Yeah," Matt says softly. "You did. Thanks Peter."

Peter hesitates, but decides it needs to be said. "There was something Tony said, right after we found you, before we knew who you were, that really stuck with me. He said that sometimes people go missing and no one looks for them. So once we found out who you were, I guess I just wanted to make sure that someone would have come looking eventually. Cause the idea of not having anyone is terrifying to me. I'm almost there you know, there's really only one person in my life who'd notice if I went missing, and that's my aunt."

"I'd notice," Matt interrupts. "I would. And I know Tony would."

Peter blinks. "Tony?"

"Yeah," Matt smiles. "He comes to visit me sometimes, during the day while you're at school. I just don't wait for you to get here you know," he says wryly. "He thinks very highly of you. Says you're brilliant and brave and courageous. I have to agree. So you need to give yourself some more credit. From what Tony tells me, which doesn't always make sense and is rarely in chronological order, it sounds like you've lost people. And that's okay, because it's hard and you're never the same person after loss, but it doesn't mean you don't have anyone. It just means you have different people."

"You know how hypocritical you sound?" Peter points out. "What happened to you that made you think you weren't worth taking care of? That you weren't worth your friend's time?"

Matt's face falls and Peter is terrified for a second that he's going to cry.

"Peter, in this job it's very important to realize you can't save everyone. No matter how hard you try, no matter how much you love them, sometimes people die and... and it's not your fault."

Peter's the one crying now, his vision is blurred and he's trying his best not to make a noise because maybe Matt won't notice.

But then he snuffles and everything goes to shit, there are tears running down his cheeks and there's probably snot on his face, and he hates himself all over again because Uncle Ben died and he has these powers and didn't do anything with them, and now Matt's trying to tell him it's okay and-

There are arms around him. Peter didn't notice anyone else coming in. Usually his spider senses would warn him about something like that.

Except the arms around him aren't normal arms, they're bulkier, and Peter can feel broken ribs creak with every breath, and he realizes it's Matt who's hugging him. Matt who is broken and adamantly not homeless and probably just as close to crying a second ago as Peter was, is hugging him.

Peter sobs and hugs him back.

They both seems to run out of tears after a few minutes, because Matt did start crying too. He was better at doing it silently than Peter, but there was no hiding it.

Thankfully, it is still set up like a hospital room, and there are tissues on a nearby table that Peter grabs and uses to wipe the tears and snot off his face. He passes a few to Matt, who takes them with a muttered thanks.

“I'm going to blame that on pain and exhaustion,” Matt says after a minute. Peter would try to tell him he doesn't need to blame it on anything, but he appreciates that a man like Matt has to at least try and maintain appearances. It's the same reason why Tony sometimes locks himself in the lab and tints the windows so no one can see in.

So Peter lets him.

“Wanna watch some more Star Trek?” Peter asks. He has homework to do, but it's just balancing chemical equations, and he can do that with his eyes closed, so he can sure do it while watching the escapades of the Enterprise crew.

They watch one episode before Matt falls asleep. Peter turns down the volume and lets it keep playing until it gets dark out. Matt doesn't show any signs of stirring, and Peter promised Aunt May he'd be there when she got home, so he packs his things up and slips out. He still feels raw and empty from crying. Maybe it was dehydration.

If Aunt May notices he's subdued when she gets home, she doesn't comment, just gives him an extra big slice of pie for dessert.

Chapter End Notes

I've been doing a first aid course 12 hours a day for the last four days, and that's why this chapter is late. I figure it's a pretty good excuse.

Chapter 15

A few days after Peter takes Foggy to see Matt, he gets a text from the man.

You up for some light cleaning?

Peter isn't sure what that means.

How so?

The reply comes quickly.

Matt's apartment hasn't been lived in for a while. I figured you're young and agile and could help an old guy like me do some cleaning.

Peter snorts. Foggy is hardly old. A bit out of shape due to a career spent sitting in an office, but not old.

Still, he's asking, which means he wants Peter involved.

Sure. I'm free this weekend.

There's only homework and crime fighting to do, both of which can wait for a couple hours while he helps out a friend of a friend. Or would Foggy be considered a friend?

Peter's not sure.

I'll text you on Saturday with the address. Will you be okay getting there?

Peter snorts. The guy seems so protective. Maybe it results from having Matt as a friend for so long?

I think I'll be fine.

He shakes his head and tosses his phone aside.

Foggy indeed texts him on Saturday, right around noon, which Peter appreciates because it means he got to sleep in.

When he shows up, the address is for the top floor of an older building that has likely been remodelled, like many things were after aliens fell into New York City.

When he knocks, Foggy answers the door in sweats and a t-shirt, a far cry from what Peter has seen him in up until then, which was only work clothes. His hair is pulled back in a bun, and he looks thrilled to see Peter.

“Great, you're here.” He pulls Peter in and shuts the door behind him. Peter really hopes he's not about to be murdered, because his body would likely never be found. All he told Aunt May was that he was helping a friend out.

It takes his eyes a second to adjust to the light. Apparently Matt, as a blind man, didn't care much for light bulbs, because the only light filtering in the room was through the large windows along the one side of the apartment. And the light coming in from there was flickering and neon, from a giant billboard.

Peter blinks.

Foggy sighs. “Sorry about the light, Matt clearly doesn't need light bulbs, and no one else has been over recently enough to notice that he needed them.”

It goes unsaid what that means- Matt has been shutting people out of his life, pushing them away, for far longer than Foggy would like.

But it also means he let himself be pushed away, a thought that Peter can see flash across his face before he dismisses it. It doesn't do to place blame, not anymore.

“I was thinking we'd probably need some cleaning supplies, and I'm right. All he has is bleach and one cleaning spray. So I can run out to grab a few things and pick up light bulbs while I'm at it.”

“Sounds good,” Peter agrees. He doesn't ask why Matt has bleach; he can guess.

He can also guess that crime techs would have a field day with Matt's apartment if they ever got their luminol spray on it.

“You can keep yourself occupied until I get back, right?” Foggy asks. Peter nods, a little offended the guy even has to ask, he's almost an adult, honestly, and then Foggy disappears.

Peter pokes around for the first bit, checking out the bookshelf before he realizes all the books are in braille. He pulls one out and flips through, marveling at the ingenuity of it. He replaces it and moves on. He opens the fridge, which is a mistake, because anything that had been in there must have gone bad even before Peter found Matt in a dumpster.

The bathroom is small but neat, the few pill containers behind the mirror labeled in braille. That seems like a thing that Foggy would do. Peter wonders if he's right.

Looking around at anything else seems like an invasion of privacy. He avoids the bedroom altogether, for now at least, and he checks all the kitchen cupboards before giving in and heading to the closet.

It's locked, but Peter considers where a guy like Matt would hide a key. Somewhere he'd be able to find it, and not too far out of the way. He looks around, spotting the fire hose.

Sure enough, the key is hidden underneath one of the top coils. Peter takes it and unlocks the closet.

In the closet, Peter finds a trunk. Inside the trunk he finds boxing gloves, other assorted boxing stuff, and a cape like thing that might have belonged to Matt's father. Underneath that level though, there is more.

The Daredevil costume. Peter has never really seen it before. He's seen blurry pictures of Daredevil and some drawings that have been in the newspaper, but no one has been able to get very good footage of it, probably because he only comes out at night and never holds still long enough.

Peter's not sure what he expected, but it exceeds his expectations. The material is black and red, with the different colours having different textures. He's sure they serve some function besides looking cool. And of course, there are the horns. Everyone knows about the horns.

His spider sense tingles, and he shoves the costume back into the trunk, shoves the lid down, and locks the closet back up, replacing the key just as Foggy comes back in the apartment. He attempts to look nonchalant, and if he fails, Foggy doesn't mention it.

Instead he brandishes the box of light bulbs, among other things. “Got em,” he says proudly.

He then looks up at the ceiling, his face falling.

Peter follows his gaze and realizes why he's disappointed. The lights are far above them. The one in the kitchen is lower, and they might be able to reach by standing on the counter, but the other

ones would require a ladder. And Peter is guessing Matt doesn't have one of those.

Foggy sags. "I should have gotten a flashlight."

Peter isn't sure that would have helped. Those head lamps that miners wear, maybe, but flashlights just take up another hand, unless you tape them to yourself, which he knows is also not a good option.

Of course, Peter could replace the light bulbs easy. But it would involve either not allowing Foggy to see him do it, or just revealing his secret identity altogether. And he's not gonna knock him out, and he doesn't think he'll be able to get Foggy out of the apartment so soon after he got back, which really only leaves one option.

Peter sighs.

"I could probably do it," he offers.

Foggy looks skeptical. "Listen, I'm not going to be the one to explain to Matt that I let both you and his coffee table get broken because I let you do something stupid."

"I'm really good at climbing. Like... free climbing," he adds.

"Did you miss the part where there is nothing to climb near the lights?"

No, Peter didn't miss that, he just doesn't need to climb anything. He could climb the wall and stick to the ceiling.

He scratches his head.

"I think I can still do it," he says. "Just get the bulb out of the box."

Foggy starts to open his mouth, but obviously thinks better of it, and shakes his head, muttering something under his breath to himself while pulling the light bulb out of the box. He hands it to Peter almost hesitantly, and Peter takes it.

He then doesn't make eye contact with Foggy for the whole five minutes it takes for him to climb up onto the kitchen counter, stick to the wall, and make his way over to the light in the middle of the room. He replaces the bulb, and it's only then that he looks at Foggy.

"Check it to see if it works?" Peter suggests, and Foggy nods, gaping at him. The light flickers on, and the room is lit up, revealing Foggy's astonished expression.

Peter hops down from the ceiling and passes the dead bulb to Foggy, who still isn't saying anything. He's still functioning though, because he takes the lightbulb from Peter.

"You okay man?" Peter asks, because he really is starting to get worried.

Foggy points to the ceiling and back to Peter.

Peter sighs. "Yeah, I told you I could do it."

"How?" Foggy says finally.

"I'm a really good climber," Peter says.

Foggy shakes his head. "Nope. That was some ninja, defying gravity shit. Is there something you need to tell me?"

Peter scratches his head. "I grew up in the circus?" he says.

"I might have believed that if you didn't phrase it as a question," Foggy tells him.

Dammit.

"I'm Batman," Peter says, with confidence this time.

Foggy laughs. "Yeah right. He's fictional."

Peter sighs. "Fine. I'm Spider-Man. Happy?"

Foggy still gapes. "What?"

"Listen man, I can't come up with any more because that one is the truth, so if you don't like it, too bad."

"But you're a kid," Foggy protests.

Peter sighs. "Maybe. But I'm also Spider-Man, which means Spider-Man is a kid," he points out. "Are you going to lecture me about it or are we going to clean?"

Foggy blinks. Peter waits.

It takes a minute, but he seems to get over it.

"Okay..." he says finally.

"We good?" Peter asks.

Foggy nods. "And I'm definitely abusing your abilities. The ceilings are gonna be spotless."

He sounds delighted, and Peter instantly regrets his life choices.

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Four hours later and the apartment is spotless, literally from top to bottom. Peter endured a lot of singing by Foggy, who isn't actually that bad, but he tended towards musicals, which Peter has almost no experience with.

Foggy insists on taking him home before he finds out that Peter lives in Queens. He then amends it to dropping him off at the subway station, like Peter is a toddler that needs constant supervision, and not a teenager with a secret identity.

He sneaks back in through the roof access after Foggy drops him off at the subway station, and takes the Daredevil suit out of the chest.

He goes out that night, not as Spider-Man, and not in Queens, but as Daredevil in Hell's Kitchen.

Crime is painfully more present than in Peter's neighbourhood, and he limits himself to using the same abilities that Matt has, so slinging webs and climbing walls is out. The eyes on the costume are so darkly tinted that it's hard to see out of them, and Peter wonders again how no one realized Matt was blind.

The ridiculous sticks that Peter found in the trunk with the costume turn out to be more useful than he thought, since they also combine to make a staff, act as a grappling hook, and can be separated for hand to hand combat.

Not as ridiculous as he expected, but still ridiculous.

Peter takes out three drug dealers and delivers them to various police stations. He stops two muggings and returns an additional wallet that one of the muggers had in his pocket.

And the worst part of the night, he stops one sexual assault. He walks the woman home before returning to pick up the guy, who he left unconscious and tied to a nearby tree, and delivering him to the police.

He puts the suit back around 2am and heads home, exhausted, but with a new found respect and admiration for what Matt does.

He nearly falls asleep in science the next day, which scares his teacher a bit, because normally he's the most attentive student. Peter apologizes, makes an excuse about loud neighbours, and tries to pay attention the rest of the class.

He almost decides against visiting Matt after school, but he didn't go see him over the weekend and Peter misses the guy.

When he gets there, Matt is wearing red tinted glasses, a worn Columbia law t-shirt, and a disproving expression.

“You know what Foggy asked me when he came by this morning?”

Matt doesn't even wait for Peter to answer, just keeps going.

“He asked me what the hell I thought I was doing going out with my injuries. Of course, I had no idea what he was talking about until he pulled up the news article Karen wrote about Daredevil's appearance last night after weeks of being away.”

Peter thinks Matt is glaring at him, but it's hard to tell because of the glasses.

“Dude, people were going to start thinking you were dead. Or at least think it was suspicious that you were gone for so long.”

“Peter, it's not your choice or your responsibility to think about these things for me. I am a grown man capable of making my own choices, and worst of all, after I told Foggy it wasn't me, and had Friday verify it, he realized it must have been you, and started interrogating me about why I thought it was okay to put you up to this.”

Oh god. “I'll explain it to him-”

“I already have,” Matt says. He sounds tired, like he was the one fighting criminals last night instead of Peter. “He pointed out, rightly so, that while I'm an adult capable of making 'dumb ass decisions',” he did air quotes when he said that, Jesus Peter couldn't believe it, “You are still a minor and therefore shouldn't be doing these sorts of things.”

Peter opens his mouth to argue but Matt doesn't let him get a word in.

“I agreed with him, told him I would talk to you, and I am. So if he asks, tell him I talked to you, okay?”

Peter blinks. “You barely lectured me.”

“Peter, I was young once. I think my senses are even more enhanced than yours, and I lived in Hell's Kitchen, which was, and still is, a very crime ridden area. The sirens would keep me up at night as I tried to figure out where they were going, what kind they were, if they were able to help someone. I could hear all of them, but I couldn't do anything about them. Then... things happened, and I learned how to use my abilities, but I didn't know how to apply them. So I tried to ignore what I heard, tried to live a normal life, but I couldn't. Just like you can't. And I know that I should tell you not to do this, that it isn't your responsibility, but I know you feel like it is, and I can't

change your mind. So I am going to tell you to be careful, and to give back my suit and stick to your own thing, okay?"

Peter nearly faints with relief. He's not sure what he thought would happen, something worse, obviously, like Matt was going to tell his aunt, despite the fact that Matt had never met his aunt, didn't know where he lived, and would have to reveal his own secret identity to do so.

He sure didn't think that Matt would tell him to give the Daredevil suit back and give him a sort of... pep talk?

What a weird day.

"Of course," Peter agrees. "Thanks."

Matt shrugs. "I've had enough people lecture me about my choices for a lifetime. I'm sure not going to do the same to you."

"So," Peter begins. "Anything new with you?"

"I'm going home tomorrow," Matt says, beaming.

"Really? That's amazing."

Matt nods. "Foggy got my place cleaned up, with your help apparently, and medically, there's no reason I need to stay here anymore. Tony has been extremely generous, but I think I'm ready to get back to living on my own."

Peter raises an eyebrow. "I'm looking skeptical at you," he clarifies for Matt.

"Foggy is moving in for a week," Matt sighs. It doesn't seem to pain him much to say it, beyond emotionally, which is great. Ribs finally on the mend.

Peter nods. "Yeah, that sounds more like it." He pauses, considering. "Man, how am I going to visit you then?"

"You are allowed to come over, you know," Matt points out. "You know where I live and everything. Just in case you ever need help with Spanish," he adds slyly.

Peter laughs. "I've got like four months left of Spanish class, so yeah I'm gonna need more help with it. I may take you up on that. And besides," he shrugs. "If you ever need Spider-Man..."

"I'll know who to call," Matt confirms.

That's all Peter needed to know.

Chapter End Notes

So that's it. There could always be room for more stories after this, but this is where this one ends.

End Notes

So I've been working on this fic since November. It's nearly done now, and I finally came up with a title to start posting it.

In Absentia refers to 'declared death in absentia' when someone is declared dead after (usually) seven years of them being missing.

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